

## THE EXHIBITS

We show the **Ethiopian cloak** (1st third of the 20th century) along with two of Enea Navarini's **tunics** (1930-1945).

We have no doubt that General Enea Navarini brought the cloak (*lambd*) to Merano. But we do not know, and there is no document about, how exactly the garment found its way into Navarini's possession. The latest and most probable thesis is that Navarini was awarded the cloak by allied Abyssinian forces in recognition of his services. In Abyssinia, the emperor, or a prince, traditionally awarded stately garments like this one to brave warriors, the cloak may thus be considered a "general's tunic". But it is just as well conceivable that Navarini took possession of the cloak i.e. as booty, by purchase or violence.

In any case, Navarini brought the cloak to Villa Freischütz and into the collection of his father-in-law, Franz Fromm. This possession probably made him quite proud, which is why we show the cloak, unlike Navarini's uniforms on the rack, as a "collector's item" on a figurine. This way, the cloak exemplifies and represents colonial objects in museums and asks what we should do with these objects.

The mix of three very different pieces of music is to admire the beauty of the garment and to remind us at the same time of the cruel circumstances of how it found its way into the museum.

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**The photographs on the piano** show Enea Navarini as a private citizen and as a military.

Navarini is seen as a private person at his wedding to Luisa, née Fromm y Hilliger, leaving St Valentin church in Merano (1925); together with Luisa at their daughter Rosamaria's christening in Villa Freischütz (1926) and together with Luisa and his father-in-law Franz Fromm in the Villa's garden (ca. 1926).

One photo shows Navarini in full dress with a crest in Rome (1927/28), the other photos show him as a military during his time in Abyssinia (1936-1938). Two photos are particularly interesting for answering the question how the cloak and other objects got into Navarini's possession: on the photo with a priest blessing him with a cross another man seems to give him a cloth or a cloak. On the second photo, Navarini holds a sabre in his hand and examines it. Two sabres like this are part of the Villa Freischütz collection.

The collage reflects what we as a team discussed while preparing the exhibition: How can we reconcile the image of the loving husband and caring father with the image of the colonial master who was responsible for a violent and genocidal war? The question is not new but it affects our attitude.

The **objects in the cabinet** belonged to Enea Navarini as well:

We combine the **book about the effects of chemical warfare** (1934) with a **photo of a poison gas manoeuvre** (1936) that Navarini participated in and that took place shortly before his mission in Abyssinia. Even if there is yet no proof if or how Navarini was part of the poison gas warfare in Abyssinia, as a general he must at least have known about it. A fact the book and the photo illustrate. Thousands of tons of poisonous gas were used in East Africa as a weapon to terrorize, to subordinate and to kill, even though Italy and other countries proscribed the use of poisonous gas as a weapon in the Geneva Protocol in 1928.

The **medal** (1938), **watch** (1936) and **amulet** (1st third of the 20th century) as divers and different “souvenirs” all attest to Navarini’s time in Abyssinia. The watch tells the same story as the letters in the Villa Freischütz collection: early in his time in Abyssinia, Navarini participated actively in “police operations” against the Ethiopian resistance, mainly pursuing the Abyssinian commander Ras Desta Damtew. The engraving on the amulet refers to the short year when Navarini was head of the commissariat with the capital city Sodo. He was awarded the “Knight’s Cross” with the fascist bundle of rods towards the end of this time in Abyssinia for his services conquering and colonising the country.

The **photo in the book** entitled “Abyssinia” (1935) shows stately garments just like the cloak in our exhibition. The headdress with the lion fur and the leather shield were part of the uniform. Villa Freischütz houses two of these shields. The **newspaper article** (1937) proves that there were not only male guerrilla leaders but also female fighters who inflicted severe defeats and losses on the occupying forces with targeted pinprick tactics until Ethiopia was liberated in 1941. Navarini’s wife Luisa most likely sent him the cutting to Abyssinia. It also highlights the role woman played on both sides, in the colonial war and in the resistance.

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